

Spermacoce latifolia Aublet, a New Record for Sri Lanka

by

K. L. D. AMARATUNGA

National Herbarium, Royal Botanical Gardens, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

(With one plate)

Spermacoce latifolia Aublet, Pl. Guian. 1 : 55, tab. 19, fig. 1, 1775 ; *Borreria latifolia* (Aublet) K. Schum. in Mart., Fl. Bras., 6 (6) : 61, tab. 80, 1888 ; Pulle, Enum. Pl. Sur., 449, 1906 ; R. Benoist, Centr. Fl. Guyane, Bull. Soc. Bot. de France 68 : 141, 1921 ; Will. et Cheesm., Fl. Trin. et Tab., 11 : 46, 1928 ; Kunth, Fl. Venez., Beihefte Fedde 43 : 678, 1928 ; Standley, Rub. Colomb., Field Mus. Bot. 7 : 163, 1930. *Borreria perottetii* D. C., Prodr. 4 : 548, 1830. *Borreria penicillata* Miq., Stirp. Sur., 176 tab. 51, 1850. *Borreria tetraptera* Miq., Linnaca, 17 : 70, 1843.

An usually erect, somewhat succulent, slightly branched herb, 15-60 cm high ; sometimes procumbent and well branched ; generally yellowish pubescent ; stems quadrangular and narrowly winged, sparingly hirsute ; leaves showing considerable variation in leaf size and shape, usually obovate, acute, contracted in a short petiole or broadly elliptic, acute ; always conspicuously veined ; veins 5-7 on each side of midrib and together with it immersed on the adaxial surface and prominent on the abaxial surface of the leaf ; leaf surface scabrous above and sparsely pubescent with a greater concentration of long stiff hairs along the veins beneath ; stipular sheath carrying prominent bristles towards the upper margin ; flowers in dense axillary verticels ; sepals 4, ovate-lanceolate, acute, ciliate, about 2 mm long ; corolla faint bluish white, 4-6 mm long ; capsule pilosulous, 3-4 mm long ; seed smooth, small, brown, with a wide hilum.

The writer has retained the name *Spermacoce latifolia* Aublet, although most modern Botanists have called it *Borreria latifolia* (Aublet) K. Schum., as *Borreria*, in its present circumscription, does not seem to be a good genus.

DISTRIBUTION

Widely distributed in tropical America and now naturalized in Singapore and Java.

First recorded for Ceylon in 1963 at Rammutugala, a quiet and little known village in the Colombo District, this quick-spreading weed is now found chiefly along the coastal belt lying at an elevation from sea level to about 500 feet, particularly in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

*Critical Notes on Ceylon Plants. XII.

It is found growing luxuriantly both in well-drained, loose, sandy soils and red gravelly soils, often forming dense matted masses in the grass and conspicuous because of the pea-green colouration.

Though by no means a troublesome weed in coconut fields, its a poor pasture herb, not readily eaten by grazing animals, probably due to its relatively low palatability.

Therefore, if allowed to spread unchecked, it could compete successfully with the more useful naturally-occurring pasture grasses found beneath coconut.

SPECIMENS EXAMINED

Colombo District : Rammutugala, *Amaratunga* 749 (PDA)- This collection represents the first record for Ceylon ; Urapola, *Amaratunga* 1072 (PDA) ; Pasyala, *Amaratunga* 1590 (PDA) ; Udupila, *Amaratunga* 2013 (PDA) ; Dompe, *Amaratunga* 2118 (PDA) ; Gonahena, *Amaratunga* 2175 (PDA) ; Imbulgoda, *Amaratunga* 2280 (PDA) ; Nittambuwa, *Amaratunga* 2296 (PDA) ; Kalagedihena, *Amaratunga* 2305 (PDA).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer is grateful to Dr. F. R. Fosberg, Special Advisor, Tropical Biology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., for confirming the identity of the materials examined and for a helpful review of the manuscript, and to Dr. J. W. L. Peiris, Deputy Director of Agriculture (Research), Central Agricultural Research Institute, Gannoruwa, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, for facilities provided.

(MS. received 11.12.72).

EXPLANATION OF PLATE

Plate 1 — Photograph of *Spermacoce latifolia* Aublet, Rammutugala, Colombo District, *Amaratunga* 749 (PDA)

